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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Pollution linked to virus spread: Vardhan

Context:

- Union Health Minister's statement on the **health risks associated with pollution.**

Details:

**Ambient air pollution:**

- Ambient air pollution is a known risk factor for adverse health outcomes, like **chronic cardio-respiratory morbidities**. The presence of these morbidities renders the affected population more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- There is emerging evidence to suggest that exposure to **ambient air pollutants, especially PM2.5 and NO2, contribute to the spread and virulence of SARS-CoV-2 infections.**
  - Closed indoor spaces provide ideal environments for viral transmission due to the lack of ventilation preventing the dilution of viral particles, and the absence of ultraviolet rays which can potentially inactivate the virus.
- According to the World Health Organization's report of 2018 over **91% of the global population reside in areas where ambient air pollution levels exceed the normal limits prescribed by the WHO**, resulting in around 4.2 million annual deaths.

**Water pollution:**

- The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health estimates that 1.8 million deaths worldwide are related to "water" (mainly **microbiological contamination**) and 0.5 million deaths occur due to **chemical pollution of water** and soil by heavy metals and other man-made chemicals.

**Plastic pollution:**

- Plastic debris is a major source of water pollution. Given its ubiquitous prevalence, persistence, accumulation in aquatic food **chains**, and adverse

effects on aquatic organisms and potentially to human health it has become an **important environmental problem**.

### Conclusion:

- Research targeted at estimating the burden of pollution and consequent health effects, is essential to design and implement suitable intervention strategies that will enable the achievement of the **sustainable development goals associated with health**.

## 2. Relooking the Mandal verdict and quota cap

### Context:

- The Supreme Court has decided to examine whether its judgment in the Indra Sawhney case of 1992 which fixed reservation for the marginalised and the poor in government jobs and educational institutions at 50% needs a relook.

### Background:

#### Indra Sawhney v Union of India & Ors case, 1992:

- The Supreme Court had set the **upper limit for reservation in jobs and education at 50%, except in “extraordinary circumstances”**.
- The court in the Indra Sawhney case tried to come up with a solution that is reasonable and strikes a fine balance between the society and rights of the backward classes.
- However, over the years, several **States, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have crossed the upper limit of 50%** and passed laws that allow reservation to be as high as 60%.

#### Maratha quota law:

- The Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018 originally provided 16% reservation to Marathas (based on the recommendation by the **Gaikwad Commission**) and came after years of protests by the community.
- In June 2019, the Bombay high court trimmed the quantum of the quota to **12% in education and 13% in jobs**. In its order, the high court said the 50% cap could be breached in exceptional circumstances.

- The Maratha reservation had been challenged in the SC and a five-judge Bench was set up to hear the same.

#### Details:

- The bench will look into whether the **Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018**, which provides quota benefits for the Maratha community, thus taking the reservation percentage in the State across the 50% mark, was enacted under “extraordinary circumstances”.
  - The Indra Sawhney judgment notes that the **50% rule could be crossed in certain exceptional and extraordinary situations** for bringing far-flung and remote areas’ population into the mainstream.
- The five-judge bench looking into the Maratha reservation issue has expanded the ambit of the case and has framed the following questions to be looked into by the court.

#### Relook at the upper limit for reservation:

- The court will be looking into whether the Indira Sawhney verdict of 1992, fixing 50% limit on quota, needs to be relooked by a larger Bench of more than nine judges.
- The Bench has made other States party to the case and has asked them to make their stand clear on the question of whether reservation should continue to remain within the 50% boundary or not.

#### Impact of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act:

- The bench will also judge whether the Constitution (One Hundred Second Amendment) Act of 2018, which introduced **the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**, interferes with the authority of the State legislatures to provide benefit to the socially and educationally backward communities in their own jurisdiction.
  - The 102<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act introduced **Articles 338B and 342A in the Constitution**.
    - Article 338B deals with the NCBC.
    - **Article 342A empowers the President to specify the socially and educationally backward communities in a State.** Thus it strips the State legislatures of their discretionary power to include their backward communities in the State List.
  - The Constitutional amendment empowers the Parliament to include a community in the Central List for socially and backward classes for grant of reservation benefits.

## Conclusion:

- The potential reconsideration of the Indra Sawhney case ruling, also popularly referred to as the Mandal case, could alter the structure of reservations that has been in place for decades.

## 3. Modi, Gotabaya speak ahead of Geneva vote

### Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa reviewed “topical developments” during a recent telephone call.

### Background:

#### Strained bilateral ties:

- Colombo’s recent policy choices on key infrastructure projects, including a decision to **boot India out of a Colombo Port terminal project** and an **approval for a Chinese energy project on the northern islands**, close to the Tamil Nadu coast have strained bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka.
- India had conveyed deep displeasure on this move by Sri Lanka.

### Details:

#### UNHRC vote:

- The **Human Rights Council would be voting on a resolution on Sri Lanka’s human rights record.**
  - A report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noting that Sri Lanka is “on alarming path towards recurrence of grave human rights violations” with respect to the **Tamil minority issues.**
- The Sri Lankan administration is counting on India’s support, which is a member of the UNHRC.
- Though it is widely predicted that India might abstain in the voting process, given India’s own principle against country-specific resolutions and growing geopolitical concerns in the strategic island nation. India could still play a crucial role in negotiations among members of the council, and potentially play a decisive role.
- China, which is also currently a member of the 47 member UNHRC, has assured Sri Lanka of its support.

### Economic assistance:

- **Sri Lanka is faced with a major economic challenge**, as it prepares to repay over \$4 billion of its outstanding debt by next year.
- Sri Lanka has previously sought \$1-billion **currency swap facility** to boost its foreign reserves that are under enormous strain since the pandemic struck. India is yet to respond. Sri Lanka's **debt freeze request** made over a year ago, too, awaits India's response.
- Recently, China is said to have approved a 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) currency swap. Also in March 2020, China granted an 'urgent' \$500 million loan to Sri Lanka to cope with the economic stress of the novel coronavirus.

### Conclusion:

- The recent discussions assumes significance amid strained bilateral ties between the two neighbours. India should try to revive its relation with Sri Lanka given the importance of Sri Lanka to **India's "Neighbourhood First" policy** and also provides an opportunity for India to **counter the growing Chinese influence in India's immediate neighbourhood**.

## GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

### 4. Retrospective laws and the Cairn tax dispute

#### Context:

- In the ruling by a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration against India in the tax dispute with the U.K.-based oil and gas company Cairn Energy Plc and a subsidiary, Cairn UK Holdings Ltd, the tribunal ordered India to pay about \$1.4 billion to the company.
- Cairn Energy has successfully moved courts in five countries, including the United States, Netherlands, France Canada and the United Kingdom, to recognise its claim as per the arbitration award.

#### Details:

- In the latest development, Cairn Energy Plc has threatened that, unless the government resolves the issue, it may be forced to begin attaching Indian assets including bank accounts in different world capitals.

- In a letter to the Indian High Commission in London Cairn's top leadership has said that the necessary preparations have been made for the verdict to be enforced against Indian assets in jurisdictions around the world if India failed to discuss paying the amount awarded.
- The assets already under consideration could include Embassy bank accounts, non-diplomatic premises, Air India planes and state-owned ships in several places including the U.K., Holland, France, Canada and the U.S.
- The move would be similar to the action against a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane that was seized in Malaysia over a dispute with an Irish company, or the seizure of a Venezuelan ship ordered by a court in favour of U.S. company ConocoPhillips in 2018.
- Cairn has stressed in the letter that it would only consider this extreme option if the Indian government did not respond.
- It has cited clauses in the U.K.-India Bilateral Investment Treaty, the UNCITRAL arbitration rules, and the New York Convention to which India is a signatory, that would be breached if India fails to pay the dues.
  - The dues include about \$220 million in accrued interest in addition to the \$1.2 billion award.

**Note:**

In a similar arbitration case, India lost against Vodafone, the government has filed an appeal in a Singapore court to defend the retrospective tax demand on the telecom firm. The officials have stressed that the government's sovereign right to levy taxes cannot be questioned under bilateral pacts.

## 5. Optical monitoring of power line health

**Context:**

- Researchers at IIT Madras have demonstrated that by using Raman thermometry on fibre optic cables, they can achieve monitoring of power transmission cables.

**Raman thermometry:**

- In the **Raman effect**, when light is scattered off an object, say a molecule, **two bands are observed, with higher and lower frequency than the original light, called the Stokes and anti-Stokes bands, respectively.**
- By studying the relative intensity of the two bands, it is possible to estimate the temperature of the object which scatters the light. This principle is used in Raman Thermometry.



- Any current flowing through a conductor would cause a temperature rise due to the Joule heating effect. Hence the flow of current through the power cables results in heating of the power cables.

#### Significance:

- The use of Raman thermometry technique allows the operators to get the **results for actual temperature measurements over tens of kilometres.**
- Alternative methods of measuring the temperature of power cables include using a thermal camera to manually monitor their length, which is cumbersome. The present method devised by the team is **both economical and provides real-time information.**

### 6. Martian 'blueberries' find a parallel on Earth

#### Context:

- NASA successfully landed its **Perseverance rover on mars.**

#### Background:

- In 2004, NASA's Mars exploration rover 'Opportunity' found several small spheres on Mars, informally named **Martian blueberries**. The study of the mineralogy noted that they were made of iron oxide compounds called haematites.
  - Similar haematite concretions have been found in Kutch, Gujarat. These have been called the **Jhuran formation.**

#### Inference:

- Haematite concretion is normally formed through precipitation from aqueous fluids. The presence of haematites suggests that there was **water present on Mars**. Water is believed to have disappeared from Mars rocks about three billion years ago.
- Haematite is known to form in oxidising environments. The Martian blueberries also indicate that the **planet had an atmosphere with oxygen as haematites need oxygen to stabilise.** Available evidence suggests that there was indeed more oxygen than the present day levels.

#### Conclusion:

- Studies from the newly landed Perseverance rover may help find new clues and signs of life and other organic compounds, thus helping us paint a detailed picture of the history of Mars.



## 7. Framework for testing water launched

### Context:

- The drinking water quality testing, monitoring and surveillance framework and guidelines.

### Details:

- The guidelines are part of the water quality monitoring framework rolled out by the **Jal Jeevan Mission**.
  - Of the ₹3.6 lakh crore Jal Jeevan budget, 2% has been earmarked for quality monitoring.
- The guidelines mandate a network of NABL accredited labs to be set up in every State, district and block over the next year. At the panchayat level, teams of women in the village water and sanitation committees will be given field testing kits.
- Detailed testing protocols and standards have been laid out to check for chemical and biological contaminants.
- The various parameters that could be tested include the water sample's **pH level, turbidity, alkalinity, hardness, presence of chloride, sulphate, iron, arsenic, fluoride, nitrate and coliform bacteria**.
- All results of testing will be fed into the **Water Quality Information Management System**.

### Significance:

- The guidelines caps tariffs to ensure that they remain within reach of common man. Hence, citizens can now get the water quality in their taps tested at reasonable rates.
- The samples tested by members of the public, as well as government officials, will create a **nationwide database of water quality**.
  - According to a 2018 assessment by the Central Groundwater Board, Chemical and biological contaminants are present in more than half of all blocks in India.
- A local official will be deputed to take remedial action in case of contamination.

### Challenges:

- Lack of adequate accredited testing laboratories.

## 8. Gregarious bamboo flowering in Wayanad poses threat

### Context:

- The **gregarious flowering of bamboo inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS)** and the nearby Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Gudalur forest division in Tamil Nadu.

### Background:

#### Life cycle of bamboo:

- Thorny bamboo (*Bamboosa bambos*) is a **monocarpic (flowering occurs only once in the life cycle) plant** belonging to the Poaceae family (grass family), and its flowering cycle varies from 40 to 60 years.
- The Bamboo flower and die.
- Profuse natural regeneration occurs from seeds after gregarious flowering. **Seeds have no dormancy**, and they can undergo germination under favourable conditions soon after seed fall. **Protection from fire and grazing is essential for proper establishment of seedlings.**

### Details:

- Bamboo groves in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, have fully bloomed marking the mass destruction of bamboo groves.
- The **bamboo groves** in the Wayanad forest are the **mainstay of herbivores like elephants, wild gaur in the Nilgiri biosphere during summer.**
  - Nilgiri biosphere is a major tiger and elephant habitat.
- With the advent of the season, migration of wild animals starts from the adjacent sanctuaries in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to Wayanad due to shortage of fodder and water.

### Concerns:

- The gregarious flowering may **adversely affect migration** in the Nilgiri biosphere.
- The mass destruction of the bamboo groves by affecting the food chain may pose a **threat to wildlife and ecology of the region.**
- The seeds could germinate into new shoots provided they have a favourable environment. **Forest fires and grazing could disturb the germination process.**

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

### GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

#### 1. AT1 bonds: SEBI New Norms

**Context:** The decision of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to slap restrictions on mutual fund (MF) investments in additional tier-1 (AT1) bonds has raised a storm in the MF and banking sectors.

The Finance Ministry has asked the regulator to withdraw the changes as it could lead to disruption in the investments of mutual funds and the fund-raising plans of banks.

**What are AT1 bonds? What's total outstanding in these bonds?**

- AT1 Bonds stand for additional tier-1 bonds.
- These are **unsecured bonds** which have perpetual tenure. In other words, the bonds have no maturity date.
- They have **call option**, which can be used by the banks to buy these bonds back from investors.
- These bonds are typically **used by banks to bolster their core or tier-1 capital**.
- AT1 bonds are subordinate to all other debt and only senior to common equity.
- **Mutual funds (MFs) are among the largest investors** in perpetual debt instruments, and hold over Rs 35,000 crore of the outstanding additional tier-I bond issuances of Rs 90,000 crore.

**What action has been taken by the Sebi recently and why?**

- **100-year Instrument:** In a recent circular, the Sebi told mutual funds to value these perpetual bonds as a 100-year instrument. This essentially means MFs have to make the assumption that these bonds would be redeemed in 100 years.
- **Limit Ownership:** The regulator also asked MFs to limit the ownership of the bonds at 10 per cent of the assets of a scheme.
- **Linkage with Yes Bank Crisis:** According to the SEBI, these instruments could be riskier than other debt instruments. The SEBI has probably made

this decision after the RBI allowed a write-off of Rs 8,400 crore on AT1 bonds issued by Yes Bank Ltd after it was rescued by SBI

### What is the impact of this decision?

- **Increased Risk:** Typically, MFs have treated the date of the call option on AT1 bonds as maturity date. Now, if these bonds are treated as 100-year bonds, it raises the risk in these bonds as they become ultra long-term.
- **Increases Volatility in Bond Prices:** This could also lead to volatility in the prices of these bonds as the risk increases the yields on these bonds rises. Bond yields and bond prices move in opposite directions and therefore, higher yield will drive down the price of bond, which in turn will lead to a decrease in the net asset value of MF schemes holding these bonds.
- **Push MF to engage in Panic Selling:** Moreover, these bonds are not liquid and it will be difficult for MFs to sell these to meet redemption pressure. Potential redemptions on account of this new rule would lead to mutual fund houses engaging in panic selling of the bonds in the secondary market leading to widening of yields
- **Impacts Fund Raising Capability of Banks:** AT1 bonds have emerged as the capital instrument of choice for state banks as they strive to shore up capital ratios. If there are restrictions on investments by mutual funds in such bonds, banks will find it tough to raise capital at a time when they need funds in the wake of the soaring bad assets.

### Why has the Finance Ministry asked SEBI to review the decision?

- The Finance Ministry has sought withdrawal of valuation norms for AT1 bonds prescribed by the SEBI for mutual fund houses as it might lead to mutual funds making losses and exiting from these bonds, **affecting capital raising plans of PSU banks.**
- The government doesn't want a disruption in the fund mobilisation exercise of banks at a time when two **PSU banks are on the privatisation block.**
- Banks are yet to receive the proposed capital injection in FY21 although they will need more capital to face the asset-quality challenges in the foreseeable future.

## 2. Shramik Kalyan Portal

### In news

- Indian Railways ensures 100% compliance of payment of minimum wages to contract workers through e-application Shramik Kalyan Portal.

## Indian Railway Shramik Kalyan

- **Developed and launched:** 1st October, 2018.
- It ensures the compliance of provisions of Minimum Wages Act.
- The contractors are required to regularly upload wage payment data into e-application.
- It ensures that contractual workers of Indian Railways get their rightful dues

### 3. Stop influx from Myanmar: Centre:

#### Context:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written to the Chief Secretaries of Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh to “take appropriate action as per law to check illegal influx from Myanmar into India.”

#### Background:

The directive comes weeks after the military coup and subsequent crackdown in the neighbouring country led to several persons crossing over into India.

#### What has the Centre said?

**The State governments had no powers to grant “refugee status to any foreigner” and India is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.**

- The **Tatmadaw**, or Myanmar military, had taken over the country after a coup on February 1.
- India and Myanmar share 1,643-km border and people on either side have familial ties.

#### About the Refugee Convention 1951:

- It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- The Convention grants certain rights to people fleeing persecution because of race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a particular social group, or political opinion.
- India not a member
- The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals. The Convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention.

- The Convention builds on **Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. A refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state in addition to those provided for in the Convention
- The **1967 Protocol** included refugees from all countries as opposed to the 1951 Convention that only included refugees from Europe.

### GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

#### 4. ICAR receives King Bhumibol World Soil Day - 2020 Award

##### In news

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has received King Bhumibol World Soil Day - 2020 Award of FAO.
- ICAR received the award for its excellent contributions in “Soil Health Awareness” on the theme “Stop soil erosion, save our future” during 2020.

##### King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award

- **Launched in:** 2018
- It acknowledges individuals or institutions that raise public awareness of soils
- **Sponsored by:** Kingdom of Thailand
- It is named after King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand

#### 5. Licensing conditions for telecom companies amended

##### In news

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has amended the licensing conditions for telecom companies.
- Now, these will include defence and national security as parameters when purchasing ‘trusted telecom products’ and sourcing equipment from ‘trusted telecom equipment sources’.

##### Key takeaways

- This means that the designated authority can cite these two aspects (Defence and national security) and ask telecom companies not to use products which it has deemed unsafe at any time.
- The new norms will come in force from June 15, 2021.
- After Enforcement, telecom companies will not be able to use any products that do not appear on the trusted telecom equipment source list or the trusted telecom product list.
- If a telecom company wishes to expand its network by using any equipment that does not come from a trusted source, it will have to take prior permission from the National Cyber Security Coordinator.

### Do you know?

- In December 2020, India's Cabinet Committee on Security approved the setting up of "National Security Directive on telecommunication sector."
- **Objective:** To classify telecom products and their sources under the 'trusted' and 'non-trusted' categories.
- The list of products telecom companies will be allowed to use in their network would be approved by the National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC).
- NCSC will make its decision based on the approval of a committee headed by the deputy National Security Advisor (NSA).

### Prelims Practice Questions

#### 1. Exercise "Desert Flag" is hosted by:

- a. Saudi Arabia
- b. United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- c. Bahrain
- d. Oman

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**



- Desert flag is a multinational exercise hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- It is an annual multi-national large force employment warfare exercise.

## 2. Consider the following statements:

1. Bureau of Energy Efficiency is a statutory body under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
2. The Energy Efficiency Enterprise (E3) Certifications Programme is launched to promote the wind energy sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer : D**

### Explanation

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is a **statutory body under the Ministry of Power** which was setup in 2002 under the provisions of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
  - It is mandated to implement policy and programmes in the area of energy efficiency and conservation.
- The Ministry of Power has launched "**Energy Efficiency Enterprise (E3) Certifications Programme for the Brick Manufacturing Sector**".
  - The E3 Certification Scheme is aimed at tapping huge energy efficiency potential in this sector. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

## 3. Consider the following statements:

1. The European Parliament has declared the European Union as 'LGBTIQ Freedom Zone.
2. Ireland became the first country to legalise same-sex marriage through public vote.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer : C**

### Explanation

- Recently, in response to the backsliding of LGBTIQ rights in some EU countries, notably Poland and Hungary, the **European Parliament has declared** the European Union an “**LGBTIQ Freedom Zone**”. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- Ireland legalized same-sex marriage. The country, which had decriminalized homosexuality in 1993, became the **first country to allow same-sex marriage** at a national level by popular vote. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.

### 4. Consider the following statements:

1. The ‘2001 FO32’ asteroid has been designated a potentially hazardous asteroid.
2. Trojans asteroids share an orbit with a larger planet, but do not collide with it.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: C**

### Explanation

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has predicted that the asteroid ‘2001 FO32’ is the largest to pass by Earth in 2021. It will be at its closest on 21st March.
- The near-Earth asteroid will make its closest approach at a distance of about 2 million kilometers or  $5 \frac{1}{4}$  times the distance from Earth to the Moon.
  - The distance is close in astronomical terms, that's why it **has been designated a “potentially hazardous asteroid”**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.

- There is no threat of a collision with our planet now or for centuries to come.
- The majority of known asteroids orbit within the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.
- The **Trojans asteroids share an orbit with a larger planet, but do not collide with it** because they gather around two special places in the orbit (called the L4 and L5 Lagrangian points). There, the gravitational pull from the sun and the planet are balanced. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Near-Earth Asteroids: These objects have orbits that pass close by that of Earth. Asteroids that actually cross Earth's orbital path are known as Earth-crossers.

**5. The 'Sangay National Park' recently seen in the news for volcano eruption is located in?**

- A Japan
- B Ecuador
- C Indonesia
- D New Zealand

**Answer : B**

**Explanation**

- **Sangay volcano** is one of the highest active volcanoes in the world and one of Ecuador's most active ones. **Hence, option B is correct.**
  - Sangay is the southernmost stratovolcano (a volcano built up of alternate layers of lava and ash) in the northern volcanic zone of the Andes. It is 5230 m high.
  - The Andes is the longest above water mountain range in the world and boasts some of the highest peaks.
- **Sangay National Park** is located in the central part of Ecuador on the Andes mountains' eastern side. It is a world heritage site.
- The earliest report of a historical eruption was in 1628. More or less continuous eruptions were reported from 1728 until 1916, and again from 1934 to the present. Sangay has had frequent eruptions in historic times, mostly of strombolian type.
- Ecuador, part of the Pacific Rim's "Ring of Fire" region, has eight volcanoes such as Cotopaxi (5,897m), Cayambe (5,790m), Pichincha (4,784m) etc. in its territory.

6. Mera Ration Mobile App was launched recently by?

- a. Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- b. Ministry of Home Affairs
- c. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- d. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Answer : d

- **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** has recently launched Mera Ration Mobile App for the benefit of those ration card holders who move to new places in search of livelihood.



### Mains Practice Questions

**1. Explain the term earthquake swarms and how they are different from aftershocks and foreshocks.**

**Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly defining the term earthquake swarms
- Discuss what you mean by aftershocks & foreshocks.
- Discuss the characteristics of the earthquake swarms and compare them with aftershocks & foreshocks.
- Conclude Suitably.

**2. Model Code of conduct has been a remarkable step in ensuring free and fair elections in India. However, the present digital era has posed challenges to it. Comment.**

### Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing about the Model Code of Conduct.
- Discuss the limitations faced by the model code of conduct in the digital age.
- Conclude Suitably.

